

DELL MAY STAY

GEOFF DELL has had second thoughts about resigning as secretary of the Athenian League at the end of the season, but has refused to confirm he will be staying on.

He said: "I have been asked by the committee and had several letters asking me to stay. There is no change in my outlook at the moment, but I have decided to leave things and see what is going to happen. I feel I must consider my position again but I don't want to be rushed into anything."

I think he will stay, for despite the losses the Athenians have suffered in recent years with clubs leaving them for the Rothmans Isthmian, he is full of ideas to improve the competition.

He said: "We are definitely going to smarten the whole thing up. We shall have a ground committee going round the clubs and making reports. We are aiming at a strong first division with about 20 clubs, fully equipped with floodlights and possessing first class facilities, within, say, three years. I can even see clubs failing to gain promotion if their facilities are not up to standard."

Sponsors are going through some hard times at the moment and there have been several cutbacks with Rothmans pulling out of motor racing and some lawn tennis tournaments. At the moment, however, there is no question of the cigarette company planning cutbacks in football sponsorship providing it carries on successfully.

The money ploughed in has been for the good of the game and the good of the clubs, but the recent happenings at Bishop's Stortford and Walton and Hersham could give grounds for concern.

Walton's problems appeared to reach a climax last week when they sacked manager Vince Craven and coach Jeff Saxton. John Martin, the new manager has been left to pick up the pieces and has done what so many managers do when faced with this situation — gone back to his old club for players.

In this case it is Bracknell Town and five of the Spartan League club's players have followed John to Stompond Lane. As a player Martin was a crowd pleaser with Kingstonian and Walton but lifting Walton, whose defeat on Saturday put them at the bottom of the first division, will be the toughest task he has faced. Walton plan a "Save Our Club Appeal" meeting next week in which they are asking everybody in the town to attend.

Bishop's Stortford stayed amateur but are faced with similar problems — a player walkout. John Dear and Paul Giggle are the latest to quit the Hertfordshire club. Dear has gone back to Dagenham and Giggle to Hitchin.

Manager Ted Hardy has been busy signing players but men of the quality that have left are hard to replace.

Hayes player manager Allan Harris is to drop the first part of his title for the next four or five matches. Allan will be on the bench. He "dropped" himself at Barking on Saturday and his side won 6-3 to pick up their first £40 bonus of the season. He said: "I plan to sit out a few more games. You can see more of the game from the bench and you also have the opportunity to put things right. When you are playing you become too involved and it is impossible to see all that is going on."

FIXTURES

(K.O. 3 p.m. unless stated)

F.A. Vase, 2nd round: Marlow v Aylesbury Utd, Amersham Town v Tring Town (2.30 p.m.).

Rothmans Isthmian League Division 1: Wycombe Wanderers v Ilford.

Spartan League: Crown an Manor v Chalfont St. Peter (2.1 p.m.).

Rothmans Hellenic League Premier Division Challenge Cup 1st round: Hungerford Town v Burnham (2.30 p.m.).